



Legal
Services
Society

British Columbia
www.lss.bc.ca

News Release

June 15, 2006

Legal aid for family services relaxed

LSS is an independent, non-profit organization that has provided legal aid to people with low incomes in BC since 1979.

Legal representation is available for serious family issues and serious criminal problems. It is also available for some immigration, mental health law, and prison law matters.

Legal advice is available at most courts through duty counsel and by telephone through LawLINE and the Brydges Line (both are province-wide toll-free lines).

Legal information is available through Legal Information Outreach Worker (LIOW) services, LawLINE, plain language publications, and Internet services, including the Electronic Law Library, the Family Law in British Columbia, the LSS, and the LawLINK websites. (See www.lss.bc.ca for most of our publications, our catalogue, and website links.)

To contact the LSS Call Centre and LawLINE, dial: (604) 408-2172 (Lower Mainland) or 1-866-577-2525 (toll free from outside the Lower Mainland).

Vancouver, BC — The Legal Services Society (LSS) has relaxed restrictions that until now limited most legal representation services in family law to matters involving violence or the potential removal of children from the province.

Effective June 15, the society will provide representation to financially eligible people for several issues that previously required approval from the Vancouver Regional Centre under the society's exception review process.

The issues involve kidnapping of the client's child by the person who has access but not custody; maintenance enforcement committal proceedings where the respondent faces imprisonment; and serious denial of access to children. In addition, the society will provide representation when clients cannot represent themselves because of a mental disability and the matter must be resolved to avoid further harm.

"We are making these changes because recently, when we looked at the exception review process, we found we have been approving legal representation for most clients who face these issues," said Executive Director Mark Benton. "Now local offices will usually determine eligibility for these issues, so an added benefit is that the application process for clients will be faster," he added.

Earlier this year, the society initiated a review of all its family law services.

"We're interviewing family law clients to evaluate our representation, advice, self-help, and information services, and find out how people deal with issues over time, including what happens when problems re-emerge," said Benton. "The findings will help us identify where to direct our resources and determine which services should be expanded and how."

The review involves interviews with a representative sample of clients who use the society's LawLINK, LIOW, LawLINE, Supreme Court and Provincial Court Family Duty Counsel, Family Advice Lawyer (at family justice counsellor offices), and referral (limited scope, emergency, and extended referral) services.

"We anticipate further family improvements once we've received and assessed the final results of the review," said Benton.

For further information, see the attached backgrounder and / or contact:

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